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IS GAME OF ANY VALUE

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THE FARMER?

BY

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Toronto:

HUNTER, ROSE & CO., PRINTERS.

1891.

PRICE, 10 CENTS.

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year one thousand eight hundred and ninety-one, by EDWARD HARRIS, at the Department of Agriculture.

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TORONTO

Is Game of any Value to the Farmer?

I.

Agricultural depression throughout Canada and the States is admitted; magazine articles and editorials on the subject are of frequent occurrence, and in various ways attention is drawn to "reduced values in farm lands" quite out of proportion to the remedies suggested. Theoretic remedies are the most depressing of all remedies, something practical, with money in it, is what the farmers want, going hand in hand with agriculture.

Canada is fitted by climate and location to be a great game-producing and game-exporting country; we have wealthy neighbours to the south of us ready to purchase an unlimited quantity at the highest prices. The demand for game is widespread, and large shipments of it are being made from British ports to New York and other American cities. In the United States the hostility existing against "Game Laws" is so deep-rooted, so prejudiced and so unreflecting, that the best informed Americans admit that "game is doomed" in their country.

In Canada, instead of taking advantage of our northern location, the destructiveness of our neighbours and the circumstances which would give us the monopoly of a great and profitable trade, by legislating to encourage game preservation as a business, we prohibit "export and sale," leaving with camping-out parties, professional sports, and a few people in the backwoods, the power to continue the extermination of game.

The question arises whether it will not pay to encourage the preservation of game on lands fitted for it by nature, and even to discourage entire dependence upon farming in unfitted localities where farming and starvation are synonyms.

An abundance of game increases the market value of land, it enriches and has a tendency to enliven the country and by adding to the food supply produces content and a spirit of independence.

If the farmers were encouraged by protective legislation to preserve and protect, not only would the cultivated farms soon abound in game, but the wilder parts would become stocked, and of greater value; our food supply would be increased, the local demand supplied, and an export trade established. The new enterprise would receive encouragement from many influential quarters, capital would be invested in or advanced to aid in stocking properties, county clubs, leagues, and associations would be formed, young birds would be protected and artificially bred, trees, valuable for wind-breaks and shades, would be planted for cover, vermin—more destructive than man to game—would be destroyed, and an overflow soon created tending to stock the surroundings, and an immense extent of country would be educated into the mysteries, business and profit of game preservation.

In Ontario, our fields and forests, rivers and streams, are becoming a desolation. A country place without either fishing or shooting is like a house without books, music or flowers.

Our cities and towns are largely made up of men country born and country bred, but the thousands of employés in financial, commercial, legal, medical, educational and other institutions, chiefly sons of farmers, leave the "old homestead" never to return. Town and country are becoming as far apart as in the days of Pharaoh when shepherds were an abomination. There is no country in the world where shooting and fishing have become more

beyond the reach of the masses and more a luxury for the rich than in the United States and in the older Provinces of Canada.

Long journeys to the Rocky Mountains, the Yellowstone River, Manitoba, the Nipigon, Muskoka, Nipissing and the salmon rivers of the lower St. Lawrence and New Brunswick, and to the outskirts of civilization, all demanding extended holidays and expensive outfits, have placed sport beyond the reach of those who most need and have best earned the most enjoyable and health restoring of all outings—a day in the country with rod and gun.

In Great Britain, a popular Ministry once imperilled their tenure of office by extending a Parliamentary session beyond the 1st September—opening-day for shooting. Legislators, judges, lawyers, doctors, bankers, merchants, manufacturers, all whose office-life makes a short recreation essential, expect to go into the country upon that day.

In Ontario, game being all but extinct, we turn our backs upon the most beautiful landscapes, rivers and streams; and trips to Europe, expensive and exhausting sea-side holidays, artificial stimulants, in-door games, and the bastard amusement of shooting glass balls and clay pigeons, take the place of field sports.

The monotonous routine of country life is the repelling force which causes city people to seek recreation and health elsewhere, and drives many sons and daughters from agricultural holdings to manufacturing centres, city occupations and commercial life.

It is now about twelve years since the importation into Great Britain of grain, live and frozen meats and other products of Canada, America, India, and the Australias, alarmed and embarrassed the British agriculturist. Mr.

Gladstone addressed meetings largely composed of farmers, recommending the cultivation of fruit. Protection was suggested by other prominent men; sheep-runs for Scotland were recommended. It does not appear that any of these theories or suggestions commended themselves to the practical good sense of the people. It is now well known that the reduced value in farm lands in the United Kingdom caused game-producing to be developed to the very highest extent. The game finds a purchaser for an estate at a high figure if it comes into the market, and the shooting can always be let, if the owner wants money for as much as its gross annual rental would bring. A farm of 11000 acres near Thedford, Norfolk, England, has recently been let for \$20,000 for eight weeks shooting, an equal amount being paid annually for the property for agricultural purposes. In the same neighbourhood 2,500 acres rents for \$5,000 for the shooting only. In Scotland, lands which fell to the value of one shilling per acre rental, are now of the value of one pound, \$5 per acre rental for game purposes. In Ireland the rabbit was introduced, and \$3,500 per annum is now paid for the rabbit shooting on a tract at all former times waste and valueless.

That recent legislation in Ontario further limiting the "close season," and prohibiting the export and even the sale of game, should be so soon followed by the appointment of Commissioners to take evidence and report, indicates that the extinction of game is now feared in responsible quarters, and that thirty years of same legislation has been a failure.

On the one hand we have Great Britain with a limited rural area and a dense population, exporting game, abounding in game, and introducing and making indigenous the valuable game birds of other countries, while on this side of the Atlantic, with an immense rural area and scattered settlements, where game and fish but recently abounded, their restoration and reproduction are under consideration.

II.

The public are not well informed as to the nature of the laws which render it possible to make game production a business.

Prior to A.D. 1831, the "sale and export" of game was prohibited in Great Britain; this led to poaching, which could not be controlled by the severest laws. In 1831 the laws were amended, and by legislative enactment the production of game was made as much a business as raising poultry, and its export and sale made legal. The production of game then became general throughout Great Britain, instead of being confined or limited to a few large land owners. This business is now regulated by laws which would be in every way suitable and acceptable to any part of Canada. The provisions are, "That any person entering upon the land of another be compelled to give his name and place of abode. If a false name or address is given, a penalty of \$25. Notice having been given him or to any person not to re-enter, he then becomes a wilful trespasser with a penalty of \$25, and increased penalties for second offences."

Verbal or written notice can be given. This is a cheap, effectual and quiet remedy, suitable for farmers in occupation of their lands.

Many farmers complain of injury to their cattle from irresponsible shooting parties, the eyes of many valuable animals have been destroyed by shot, fruit is taken and fences injured. The pernicious habit of rambling over fields without the consent of the owner would be checked, were it even known that the above provisions existed as part of the law of the land. Such an act would be a boon to farmers in many "tramp-inflicted" localities, quite apart from the question of game protection. The preservation and restoration of game depends largely upon the existence of laws which, if enforced, ensure

the privacy of and freedom from intrusion upon property where game is, as well as upon laws regulating close seasons. The ordinary law of trespass and the "Petty Trespass Act" are not sufficient for the purpose; all wild birds and animals become restive if their solitude is continually broken. Trespasses are frequently committed in which little or no damage can be shewn, but disturbances have been created or information has been obtained by scouts or the idle, leading to subsequent serious damage. Man does so much to destroy and so little to protect game that it follows as a consequence that as far as possible they should be left undisturbed, and more particularly during the periods of incubation or nesting season.

The friction which occurred in days long past in Britain in connection with the game laws was not between the owners of the land and the public, but between landlords and tenants. Here we are free from those complications, and legislation is greatly simplified. Pot-hunters bear no resemblance to the poacher. The British poacher sleeps all day, is a hanger-on of small taverns, and works by night with nets and snares and traps. He is in fact the common thief inseparable from overcrowded communities. At the present date, for attack, defence, or retreat, he carries a bag of stones to avoid the penalty of going armed by night. Our pot-hunters, equally effective as game exterminators, are usually temperate, active, intelligent men, country-bred. It is of such men that head game-keepers and kennel managers, and assistants and other well paid employés are made, where the production of game is an established business.

The destruction of our trout streams and river fish can only be described as an infamy. Drugs and nets have been freely used, water drawn off, and the law as to seasons habitually disregarded. Seine drawing in or near the breeding places in the lakes and bays and at the

mouths of rivers and creeks have destroyed the river fish and cut off a large food supply from inland settlers; in this they should have been protected by law. The absence of shade and pollution of rivers and streams are given as reasons for the disappearance of trout. Pollution of streams is illegal and can be stopped, and for shade, forest trees, osiers and basket willows can be planted at a profit. But the trout and river fish are extinct in rivers and streams which are not polluted, and where there is shade.

"Common property in game" was no doubt a useful cry for the emigration agent, and in the earlier days of settlement was a necessity. A cry of "property in game" might now induce capitalists to invest in waste and unproductive lands, assist to make interesting, enliven and enrich the country and be a help to many farmers struggling for existence on exhausted or incumbered farms. It is worth an effort also to endeavor to check a growing distaste for country life among all classes not already wedded to or indulging in the excitement of city life. A distaste for country life, or symptoms of unrest and discontent, are not infrequent among the families of the most prosperous and best located farmers. This exodus from the country to the cities has recently attracted attention in the United States. An inquiry has shown that more farmers have left the best farms in Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin to reside in Springfield city and Janesville city than have abandoned the worn-out lands of New England. The western farmers with fine farms, now subdivide them, and make the best terms with tenants, not infrequently foreigners, tending to foster absentee landlords, and to create an ignorant rural peasantry.

III.

H. D. Minot's work, published by the Naturalist Agency, Salem, Mass., has the following description of the

quail (page 393): "Our observations of them," he says, "naturally begin at that season of the year when they relinquish their habits of extreme cunning and vigilance for those of confidence in man's respect for domestic life, that is, in the early part of summer. Though among the hardiest and most active of feathered creatures, they are prudent in spring, and do not commit themselves to the risks of incubation until they have received full assurance of fitting weather. In this respect they differ from the feebler, but more venturesome, woodcock, whose premature endeavors, founded upon the first deceptive smile of spring, to raise a family, are often defeated by an unexpected snowstorm. The quail do not begin until May, when they announce the fact to all their neighbors within half a mile, by their loud, frank and cheery whistle, which is generally translated into our uncouth language as 'Bob White.' The male is not now constrained by fear, and instead of any false pride, he has a proper sense of his own comely appearance. He knows that he is attending adequately to his department in the great business of nature, and is entirely willing that any should see him. He has no fear of man, but he keeps an eye to the hawks, cats and other predatory enemies who respect neither time, place nor season. He is willing to take any amount of family responsibility. Nature cannot ask too much of him; he will whistle to two or three wives if necessary, and he will even accept the law of Moses, and assume the part of husband towards his brother's widow. Should his wife propose a family of fifteen instead of nine, he does not complain, and moreover, having escorted his young family about for a short time, he is ready to go through this once, or even twice more. In fact he carries his amiability so far as often to introduce a half-grown family to the rigors of winter, so that it is not uncommon to find a covey of these little 'cheepers' when hardly able to fly even in November. A successful pair of quail often turn out twenty-five young in a season.



These valuable and interesting game birds, when in great abundance, took refuge in the barn yards throughout the country during the severe storms of winter, and were slaughtered and netted. Railway extension in 1860 to 1880 opened up a market for them. They were converted into money, and in most places exterminated.

Quail, grouse, commonly called partridge, and prairie fowl, are the non-migratory game birds of Canada, all excellent for sporting purposes and the table, and have a market value so high that no domestic birds compare in price. The quail is so prolific that they would with ordinary care again abound in all the cultivated fields.

Grouse are not so prolific, but hardier; they rank with the highest class of game birds. The fearlessness of these birds when nesting and in charge of their young causes them to fall an easy prey to foxes, hawks, and other vermin. Lowlands and cedar swamps—the natural habitat of the larvæ of the army worm, cut worm and other insects—are much frequented by grouse in search of such food. Their value to the agriculturist can hardly be estimated as insect destroyers, and with ordinary care they would soon re-stock the forests,

The capercaillie, now abundant in Scotland, became extinct in 1827. The capercaillie is the largest of the grouse species and inhabits northern Europe. It is of the size of a turkey cock, of a dark grey, and red about the eyes, and weighs from 8 to 12 pounds. He is tender and delicious. He lives in bushy fir trees and is very shy, and, like all grouse, very partial to insects injurious to pin-timber. The particulars of the restoration of this valuable bird into Scotland will be found in the work of J. A. Harvey-Brown, F.Z.S., Edinburgh.

In 1836, Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton undertook its restoration into Scotland by importation of a few birds from Sweden. It is now plentiful in the forests northwards from Stirling, and the markets of the United Kingdom are supplied with it.



There are thousands of acres lying waste in Canada where the Capercaillie would thrive. Old pine forests stripped of the marketable timber are the best localities for them; lands of little value for any other purpose than cover and shelter for deer and feathered game of the grouse species. This is a valuable example of the ease with which an exterminated bird can be restored. As an addition to our food supply, the introduction of the Capercaillie into Ontario is worthy of consideration. Had we a National Park, many valuable birds, the results of tests and experiments, would be introduced and become indigenous. The pheasant is an imported bird and made indigenous throughout Great Britain, adding greatly to the food supply and the wealth of the country. It has been introduced into British Columbia, and now abounds in every portion of the coast there. It has also been introduced into some far distant western states. This subject is not without interest in the most prosaic business circles. The manufacture and sale of guns and ammunition, rods and tackle, boats, tents and canoes, and the endless supplies connected with fishing and shooting, absorb millions of capital, and give employment to thousands of skilled operatives, women and children. Such pursuits thrive as game increases, and struggle for existence with its extermination. From an agricultural point of view, entomologists and botanists report the destruction of crops, trees and fruit, by insects on the increase, and that such insects are characteristically farm insects; that no new remedies have been discovered for keeping them in check; a new insect has been discovered in the hay, and that efforts are now being made to discover the insect destroying pine timber. The army worm, the cut worm, caterpillars, borers, weevils, locusts, potato and other beetles, cabbage worms, turnip fly, wheat worms and midges, and many insects, a torture to live stock, all are on the increase.

Insects pass through four stages—the egg, the larva,

the chrysalis and the perfect insect. Insectivorous birds being migratory, destroy the perfect insect during the summer months. During the autumn, winter and spring, game-birds depend largely for food upon the eggs, larva and chrysalis, and as insect destroyers are more effective than insectivorous birds; the grouse and partridge especially are most active in search for such food.

The Ontario Entomological Report, 1889, contains valuable information, some of it indirectly useful in this connection. It will there be found that anyone who walks in the rural parts of France will see small children following the plow, pitcher in hand, collecting white grubs, this work being done in England by birds. That nearly all useful birds are exterminated in France, and that on [two-and-a-half acres a single woman collected 759 lbs. of white grubs or cockchafer larvæ in 15 days, the number being 180,000.

The remedy for the army worm and cut worm will give the general reader some idea of the insect plague in Canada.

"They may be prevented marching from one field to another by ploughing a deep furrow across their path. This should have the edge nearest the field to be protected perpendicular or slightly overhanging the trench so formed, pits must be dug, about twelve feet apart. When the caterpillars come to the trench they are unable to climb up the opposite side, and after a few trials walk along till they fall into the pits, where they may be destroyed by covering them with earth and tramping it down."

The abundance of rich food in orchards, cultivated fields and gardens, encourages the development of insect life. Nature supplied birds, and more particularly non-migratory birds, to keep these pests in check. Small birds and insectivorous birds are protected by the law, but are now seldom seen.

Foxes, racoons, skunks, weasels, hawks, owls, crows, blackbirds, butcher-birds, and jays are now destroying what man has spared of both insectivorous and game birds. Like the weeds which defy frost, and, cut down, grow again, so do these vermin defy the snow crust which smothers the quail and cripples the deer, and wet seasons which drown grouse and woodcock. There is no organized plan to destroy such vermin, nor will there be until game preservation becomes a recognised business of the country. The extermination of the migratory game birds—woodcock, snipe, rail and plover—may be said to be now complete.

The reports of professors are discouraging in relation to destroying insect life, but receipts, remedies and plans are given, which if adopted in conjunction with nature's remedies, would produce good results. No receipts are given for the destruction of foxes and other animals, hawks and other vermin which destroy the useful, valuable birds which are nature's remedy for keeping insect life in check. Information on these subjects should be made widespread throughout the country.

An American writer says: "The birds and beasts we would gladly get rid of maintain their numbers, while those whose increase we desire are losing ground. That their destiny is to become hunters of skunks and shooters of crows and sparrows, and that before many years the leading sportsmen of America will be wrangling over the points and merits of their skunk and woodchuck dogs, and bragging over their bags of crows and sparrows."

The destruction of vermin (foxes, hawks, etc.), which would go hand in hand with the production of game, is in itself a profitable and interesting occupation, and one which can be followed every day in the year. It requires, in many instances, greater skill and acuteness than necessary when in pursuit of game. The skins of all the ani-

mals are valuable. Taxidermists, museums and collectors purchase birds; the skins of birds, and the eggs. Male and female specimens with the nests and eggs complete, bring very high prices. Poison traps and nets can be used in their destruction. It is clear that the present occupants of all farm lands throughout the province would derive immediate pecuniary benefits from systematic game preservation. There are even now localities where shooting having been prohibited by law temporarily for the purpose of reproduction, where money has been paid for the right to shoot, and where friends have been invited to shoot. These profits and courtesies would become general with game preservation.

The farmer is slow to realise the change which has taken place in his condition. The farm was at one time a home from which came a direct supply of food and raiment. Ease, comfort, and hospitality were the rule. Now everything goes to the market and the farmer is as much in business and a buyer of supplies and necessities for home use and consumption as any city man. He requires capital and can no longer afford to waste any of the resources appertaining to his property. There are a few places where the rights connected with game and fish are now of value, and a value which should increase yearly like the growth of a tree without waste of time or expenditure of money. There are localities where with a little care returns would be produced exceeding the profits from agriculture.

The farming community are the aristocrats, the owners of the soil, still one of the adjuncts, one of the most interesting and valuable rights of the soil, has hitherto run to waste or been regarded as common property.

Farmers could establish sporting clubs, leagues, or associations under rules and regulations as complete and business-like as regulate cheese and other corporations. City people would gladly assist with time and money to perfect such organizations.

Combined properties covering a large extent of ground—the various owners being mutually interested in its protection—would become a marked feature in country life. Counties and the residents of counties would take a pride in their successes in game preservation. But these things will not be done until the law is strengthened.

In New York State and on the Passic River not far from New York, Jersey City and Newark, the "tramp and trespass habit" has become so great a nuisance that 8000 acres of farm land has been leased to the Chatham Fish and Game association of New Jersey, for game and shooting purposes by the farmers, the one consideration being that the association will keep off trespassers, and that 50 square miles could be had for game preservation purposes from the farmers thereabouts.

The tramp and trespass nuisance increases with the growth of cities. Every new immigrant comes out with the idea that game is "common property," and can be shot and hunted anywhere.

A pamphlet "Canada," issued at Ottawa by authority during the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886, page 148, has the following:—

"Game here is common property; it affords food for the settler, sport for the disciple of St. Hubert, and the hunter and trapper each find pecuniary profit in its pursuit."

This statement is calculated to injure the older Provinces, and be of doubtful benefit to the new.

It is not surprising that tramps and the ignorant become abusive when "ordered off," and that a better class "upon pleasure bent," are indignant at having been deceived.

Sportsmen by urging the necessity for "close seasons" have retarded but not prevented the destruction of game.

In Canada the whole question of reproduction and protection of game and fish is with the farmers. They can

demand legislation as a right, and they are on the spot to protect. No practical and useful movement in game legislation of direct benefit to the farmer can be expected from any representative body until pressure is put upon them. The modern legislator follows public opinion. He no longer leads. The Farmer, if he wants legislation, must make the local representative understand that it is required.

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Toronto.
